

1. Defining the gifts

☞ **Spiritual Gifts vs. natural talents or abilities**

A spiritual gift is usually defined in terms of something that accompanies our salvation and was not present before we were *born again* & baptized with the Holy Spirit (briefly explain "born again" and baptism of the HS)

All abilities are gifts from God and it is irrelevant whether they were given before or after we embraced Jesus Christ. The point is that they have been entrusted to us by God & we will, one day, have to give an account for how we have used them.

☞ **Supernatural Gifts vs. natural ones / The miraculous and the non-miraculous gifts**

God gives many gifts to His children...

Natural Gifts (*common grace*):

- Gifts which are given to all people to one degree or another...
 - Life, Talents and abilities, Common Grace, Family & Friends, Provision...

Supernatural gifts (*saving grace*):

- Gifts which are given only to those whom God calls to be His own, and yet **to ALL those whom He calls** - saving grace, saving faith, regeneration, etc.

Rom. 8:9 ^(NIV84) - ...If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.
- Gifts which are given **only to specific people** & which are not attributable natural human development - Tongues, supernatural healing, the ability to cast out demons, other miracles, etc.

☞ **The "Sign" Gifts vs. Ongoing Gifts**

- The "Sign" Gifts:

The "sign" gifts were supernatural gifts which were given to prove that God was at work and that this was not merely the effort of some deluded men. These gifts were crucial components in the initial establishment of the church.
- *Tongues, supernatural healing, the ability to cast out demons, other miracles, etc.*

- The ongoing gifts:

The ongoing gifts are gifts which God has given for the purpose of building His Church. These are the gifts which Paul speaks of in our text this morning: prophesy, service, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, & showing mercy.

We could add to that list gifts like: music, craftsmanship, working with youth, counseling, etc.

It is unnecessary and counter-productive for us to differentiate between those gifts which were given to us before, or those which were given AFTER we embraced Christ. The point is that they WERE given to us. They ARE gifts.

WHATEVER gifts God gives / entrusts to us, they are to be used to build His church, to bring HIM glory...

I think we can safely say that when we are filled with the HS, ANY gifts which He has given us, whether they were there before we were filled with the HS or not, are going to be ENHANCED, or strengthened by the HS when we use them as God intended them to be used.

2. Discovering and Using the gifts

The crucial qualifier, in terms of our context this morning: The gifts God gives to His redeemed and adopted children are given to build the BODY of Christ, not for our own personal glory or pleasure, or whatever...

The goal: the building of the BODY of Christ

Ephesians 4:11-13 ^(NIV84) - It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1 Peter 4:10 ^(NCV) - Each of you has received a gift to use to serve others. Be good servants of God's various gifts of grace.

1 Corinthians 12:7 ^(NLT) - A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

How do I know what my giftedness is?
What if I don't have any gifts?

1 Corinthians 12:7 ^(NLT) - A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

Some ways to discern our giftedness:

- ☞ Understand and appreciate the gifts that EACH and every one of us has been given...
- ☞ Don't try to separate gifts which you had before you believed from those you might have received SINCE you believed.
- ☞ Don't compare YOUR giftedness with others... There is almost ALWAYS someone better...
- ☞ Be willing to attempt things OTHER people think you could or should do... (Do not allow the fear of failure to keep you from offering yourself...)
- ☞ Be aware of the burdens God lays on your heart (If you see a need... If you have a desire...)
Our business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.
THOMAS CARLYLE
- ☞ Be willing to accept and believe the affirmations of others...
- ☞ Be willing to accept the fact that you might have been given gifts which are different from what you would have chosen...
- ☞ Always remember that the goal in every gift is the glory of God in the building up of His Church...
- ☞ Gifts, like so many other things in life, are strengthened through use & atrophy through non-use

Some ways to blur or hide our giftedness:

- ☞ Insist on doing what others rarely affirm you in or ask you to do... (teaching, singing, leading...)
- ☞ Allow the fear of failure to keep you from attempting new things...
- ☞ Keep focused on what's in it for you - in terms of affirmation or any other return...
- ☞ Narrowly define what God's gifts have to look like...
- ☞ Allow past failures to convince you that you have nothing to contribute...
- ☞ Focus on your INABILITIES rather than on God's ALL-sufficiency...
- ☞ Be quick to take offense when anyone criticizes you...
- ☞ Be too busy to volunteer... (rationalize and justify your failure to contribute to the needs of the body...)
- ☞ Focus on what you can NOT do...
- ☞ Allow the fact that others are neglecting what YOU are doing, or not appreciating it, to rob you of the joy of serving...

The relationship between faith and gifts

v. 6 - We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

God does not treat each of us the same. He deals with each of us uniquely. By faith we need to believe certain truths:

1. Life, itself, and every good thing in it are gifts from God for which I will one day give an account.
2. If I am, indeed, a child of God, redeemed and justified by the finished work of Jesus Christ and therefore filled with the Holy Spirit, then I do have something important to contribute to the growth of the Church...
3. The fact that I can say, from the depth of my heart, that "Jesus is Lord" is clear evidence that God has filled me with His Holy Spirit.
4. Every ability that I have, whether I can see evidence of it before I believed or not, is entrusted to me for HIS glory and for the building up of His Church.
5. God takes the meager efforts of fallen, sinful people like you and me and does amazing things through us... if only we are willing...

The presence of Christ brings us his power and ability to use our limited resources in his limitless ways.
REBECCA MANLEY PIPPERT

God does not ask about our ability or our inability, but our availability.
Source Unknown

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do. And what I ought to do, by the Grace of God, I shall do.

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

The Message: If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them.

A Truth to Remember: All good things are from God, entrusted to us for a time and are to be used to glorify Him.

A Challenge to Consider: Are you using what God has given you to build His church?

One thing I heard this morning was...